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Perspectives in U.S. HISTORY
The Civil Rights Movement

21:510:315

Spring 2018

Class Location: Conklin 346

Class Meeting Time: Tuesday 2:30-5:20

Writing Intensive

Course description

The Civil Rights movement, with roots in activism that dated back to the early twentieth century and which developed into a broad range of transnational activism in the post-World War II decades, was arguably the most significant social movement in U.S. History. And yet, most people encounter civil rights for a class or two in elementary and high school, and through a few iconic figures and moments: Martin Luther King Jr. addressing the crowd at the March on Washington in 1963 declaring “I have a dream”; Rosa Parks declining to give up her seat on a bus in Montgomery because she was “old” and “tired”; protesters singing “We Shall Overcome.”

In this course, we will look more deeply at just a few select episodes that comprised this transformative era of black activism. Rather than aim for breadth or anything resembling systematic coverage, we instead will probe more deeply, and from various perspectives, key moments and/or themes in civil rights history: the murder of Emmett Till in 1955; the March on Washington in 1963; and the intersections of sports and civil rights in different eras. In each of these three units, we will examine a range of primary sources—newspapers, photographs, speeches, legislation, trial transcripts, interviews, poetry, memoirs, letters, music, and more. We will work on how to interpret, analyze, read between the lines, and question the sources; we will ask how and where they were produced, who produced them, and not only what the sources reveal but how they do so (and what they might NOT reveal, and why that can matter). As we interpret the past together, we will be peeling away the layers of what might at first seem to be simple stories to reveal the complexity and messiness of history. In other words, through this “detective work,” we will be “doing” history: pulling together a large body of often-discordant evidence as we work to make sense of the past.

The format of the course will be a combination of lecture, discussion, and smaller group activities. We will often read, watch, listen to, and discuss primary sources together. Because of the central role discussion will play, **it is essential that you complete the required reading and/or the required viewing and listening by the date indicated on the syllabus.** Note that you will be evaluated on your understanding of sources that are assigned for homework *and* those you first encounter in class; as such, you will need to attend class regularly, take notes, and engage actively in order to succeed.

Goals and Learning Objectives

By the end of the semester, students in this writing-intensive course will have learned:

- How to analyze and evaluate a range of primary sources—written, visual, and aural—critically and as historical documents;
- How to find relevant evidence: over the course of the semester, students will take on the investigative work of finding their own original newspaper sources.
- How to write an essay (including drafting and revising) in clear terms about civil rights activism, with a focus on argument, historical evidence, and clarity.
- How to make sense of pivotal events in the history of the civil rights movement and to think about race relations in conjunction with with issues of class, gender, sexuality, and place.

Required Texts

Most required readings and most required clips and viewings will either be available through links on the syllabus or on blackboard under course documents.

One book is for sale at the Rutgers Bookstore (and available elsewhere as well):

Christopher Mettress, *The Lyching of Emmett Till: A Documentary Narrative* (University of Virginia Press, 2002).

We will *likely* be reading one novel later in the semester:

Bebe Moore Campbell, *Your Blues Ain't Like Mine* (Ballantine, 1993).

I encourage you to buy the cheapest version you can find as soon as possible (you can get a used copy on Amazon for \$4-5, but leave time for delivery).

Grading and Requirements

Attendance and Participation: 25%

Quizzes: 20%

Two 3-page papers: 30% combined; 15% each

One final essay, 6-7 pages: 25%

1. Attendance and Class Participation (25%).

This crucial component of the course includes:

- Showing up and being prepared. Attendance *combined with* consistent and thoughtful participation in class discussions is required. Simply attending class is not factored into the participation grade – students are required to come to class ready with questions or observations about the readings and ready to take part in the discussion to earn a good participation grade. You must do all of the assigned reading/listening/watching, and come to class **with required texts in hand**. This is a seminar and not a passive learning environment; it is your responsibility to engage thoughtfully and respectfully—with the material and with each other. This means: no talking in private conversations, no cell phone use or any other form of texting, no use of computers or laptops (unless you get specific permission based on your learning style), no working on other homework.

- Please notify me in advance if you need to miss a class meeting and your absence may be excused; if an emergency arises, please email when it is possible to do so. If you miss more than one class for medical reasons, you must provide a doctor's note. You must attend the entire class to be counted as present on any given day. Missing more than **two classes total** will affect a final grade. **Any student who misses four or more class sessions through any combination of excused and unexcused absences may not earn credit in this class.** Such students should withdraw to avoid getting an F. Arriving late or leaving early is disruptive to other students, and is only acceptable in an emergency situation.

- Source Analysis. To support your participation and (even more), to help you prepare for the essay-writing part of the class, you must come to class with a typed 1-2 page response analyzing one of the sources assigned that week at four points during the semester. All students must complete the first source analysis on **January 23** and the fourth source analysis on **March 20**; you have two possible dates to submit the second and third source analyses. I must receive these source analyses by 10 am on Tuesday mornings, and they **must relate to the material we will be covering in class that day**. You will receive comments and a check/check +, or check – on these source analyses, and not a letter grade; but, they will count toward the numeric grade of class participation and are essential building blocks to other writing assignments.

- Discussion Questions. To facilitate participation and assist with writing, at TWO points during the semester (at any point when you are not writing a source analysis), you must submit TWO discussion questions based on the required materials for that week. These discussions questions must be posted on blackboard by Tuesdays at 10 am. These questions must show that you have read/watched/listened with care, and are asking thoughtful questions about the material. In other words, these questions should not generate answers that simply summarize the material. I encourage you to check the discussion board each week to see what questions others have posted and to respond, but these responses are not required.

2. FOUR unannounced quizzes (20%).

During the first —OR THE LAST—10 minute of four classes, there will be a quiz, based on the material required for that day of class OR based on the material we cover that day in class. These quizzes are designed both to ensure that

you keep up with the homework, and to encourage you to pay attention and take notes during class. The lowest quiz grade may be dropped at the end of the semester. Please note that class will begin promptly at 2:35 pm each week and we will generally meet until 5:10 pm. If you arrive late or leave early without being in touch first for an excused absence, you may not take the quiz and you will receive an F/60 for that quiz. If you have specific issues complying with this rule on a consistent basis, please be in touch as soon as possible.

3. Two 3-page essays (15% each, 30% combined). These essays will build off the source analyses and will be based only on materials we have covered together in class. You will have a choice of topics.

- Essay one: February 20th.
- Essay two: March 27th

4. Final essay, 6-7 page essay (25%). In this final essay, you will revise and expand upon one of your two shorter essays. You will draw on additional sources from the syllabus and at least one new primary source from off the syllabus. Your final essay grade will be based on how you engage with the revision/expansion process as a whole and not just your final essay.

- Due Date TBA.

(There will be several extra credit options along the way; see below, and more TBA.)

A few other things...

--Deadlines matter. All assignments are due on the dates indicated. **Grades will be lowered on late (or missing) papers**, unless you have talked with me in advance and received an official extension.

--Academic integrity matters. Rutgers University treats cheating and plagiarism as serious offenses. In any/all of your papers, you must cite and provide a reference for all language **and/or** ideas that are not your own (including response papers). The essays for this class are based ONLY on required readings on the syllabus. You need not—and indeed should not—be going to any sources beyond the syllabus as you write your papers. However, should you make the choice to look at other sources, you **must** cite those sources. Violations of the university honor code will be prosecuted to the full extent that is permitted. All students will sign the Rutgers University Honor Code Pledge.

--Respect matters. In this course, we will be reading and discussing material on which we may not all agree; some of the themes and imagery we encounter in the sources may seem offensive or otherwise controversial. In this context especially, it is crucial for us to combine the free expression of ideas with respect for each other.

--Technology matters. Please turn cell phones off and **put phones and all devices away** before class begins. Please bring hard copy of readings to class. Laptops and other devices are **not allowed**. If you feel that it's particularly important for you to take notes on a laptop, please email me in advance to explain why and to receive written permission (and note that I may say no unless you have a documented reason for needing technology in the classroom); if you do receive permission to have a laptop in class, only class-related materials may be open. Texting or emailing or otherwise using technology in an inappropriate way at any time during class is **prohibited**. If your phone rings during class, I will ask you to leave the room to turn it off. If this happens more than once, a student will be counted as absent for that entire day. If any phones or other devices are visible during class, this will create an impression of texting, etc. That student will be counted as absent for that day.

--Communication matters. Note that this syllabus is **a work in progress**; there will be modifications along the way. I will use email through blackboard to communicate and will assume that you receive and read these emails. If you do not use your Rutgers email regularly, please have these emails forwarded to you so that you can keep up.

--Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as

early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>. For more information please contact Kate Torres at (973) 353-5375 or in the Office of Disability Services in the Paul Robeson Campus Center, in suite 219 or by contacting odsnewark@rutgers.edu.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

January 16: Introductions and Preliminary Questions

January 23: The death of Emmett Till, I: Murder and Mourning

Required Reading/Viewing/Listening:

- Christopher Metress, ed., *The Lynching of Emmett Till: A Documentary Narrative*, selected newspaper coverage, pp. 14-38.
- David Jackson, "Images of Emmett Till," *Jet Magazine*, September 15, 1955, pp. 6-9 (please look at the cover of the issue and skim around some other areas as well, but focus on these pages):
https://books.google.com/books?id=57EDAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false
- Watch: short video on Time.Com, "100 photos: The Body of Emmett Till":
<http://100photos.time.com/photos/emmett-till-david-jackson#photograph>
- Listen: NPR: <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1969702>

Source analysis, I: (1-page required for all)

Choose one newspaper article and **describe** what story that article tells. What does the article focus on? What does it *not* focus on? After your description, please include 2-3 quotes from the article that you think are particularly relevant to what you've described.

January 30: The death of Emmett Till, II: Trial

Required Reading/Listening:

- "The Emmett Till Murder Trial, Selected Testimony": <http://famous-trials.com/emmettill/1757-tilltestimony> (specifics to focus on TBA).
- Metress, ed. *The Lynching of Emmett Till*, selected newspaper coverage, pp. 44-112.
- Dan Wakefield, "Justice in Sumner" *The Nation*, October 1, 1955, pp. 284-285.
- Interviews, defense attorney J.W. Kellum and civil rights activist Amzie Moore.
<http://repository.wustl.edu/concern/videos/xp68kh89g>

Source analysis, II (due date 1; choose 1):

1. Choose one newspaper article and **analyze how** it depicts any one particular aspect of the trial (a certain witness, a certain space, a certain scene). Focus in on one feature of the article to consider what kinds of language and imagery it uses to create meanings of Till's death and/or the trial. What emotions is it trying to evoke? Include 2 quotes as examples.
2. Choose one witness and one aspect of the testimony and **analyze how** it depicts Till or his death; focus on one feature (or segment from) the testimony to consider what kinds of language and imagery the participants use to create meanings of Till's death and/or the trial. What emotions is it trying to evoke? Include 2 quotes as examples.

February 6: The death of Emmett Till, III: Aftermath

Required Reading:

• William Bradford Huie, “The Shocking Story of Approved Killing in Mississippi.” *Look*, January 24, 1956: 46–48: <http://famous-trials.com/emmettill/1766-confession>

• William Bradford Huie, “What’s Happened to the Emmett Till Killers?” *Look*, January 22, 1957: 63–68, in Mettress, ed., *The Lynching of Emmett Till*, pp. 208-213.

• James L. Hicks, “An Open Letter to U.S. Attorney General Herbert Brownell and FBI Chief J. Edgar Hoover,” *Washington Afro-American*, November 19, 1955, in Mettress ed, *The Lynching of Emmett Till*, pp. 194-199.

• “Mamie Bradley’s Untold Story,” *Chicago Defender*, April-June 1956, in Mettress ed, *The Lynching of Emmett Till*, pp. 226-235.

Source analysis, II (due date 2; choose 1):

1. Choose one passage from either of Huie’s articles and **analyze how** he depicts any of the “protagonists” in the death of Emmett Till. Focus on the language and imagery Huie uses—and what kind of story he tells as a result—to consider what he (Huie) is suggesting about this person. What emotions is he trying to evoke? Include 2 quotes as examples.
2. Choose one passage from either Hicks or Bradley’s articles and **analyze how** it depicts the trial (for Hicks) or Till (for Bradley). Focus on the language and imagery that either uses—and what kind of story either Hicks or Bradley tells as a result—to consider what either one is suggesting about the trial and/or Till. What emotions is either trying to evoke? Include 2 quotes as examples.

February 13: The death of Emmett Till, IV: Popular Culture

Required Reading/Listening/Viewing

• Bob Dylan, “The Death of Emmett Till,” (1962), listen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVKTx9YIKls>

read lyrics: <http://famous-trials.com/emmettill/1764-murdersong>.

• Emmy Lou Harris, “My Name is Emmett Till” (2011), listen or watch:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlHAr5IZhp8>; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8uNOyn_75o

read lyrics: <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/emmylouharris/mynameisemmettill.html>

• Gwendolyn Brooks, “A Bronzeville Mother Loiters in Mississippi. Meanwhile a Mississippi Mother Burns Bacon” (1960). <https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/a-bronzeville-mother-loiters-in-mississippi-mean/>

• Gwendolyn Brooks, “The Last Quatrain of the Ballad of Emmett Till” (1960). <https://allpoetry.com/The-Last-Quatrain-Of-The-Ballad-Of-Emmett-Till>

• Controversy over the Whitney Biennial:

Look closely at the painting: <https://hyperallergic.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Dana-Schutz-22Open-Casket22-2016-1-720x535.jpg>

Michael Harriot, “This white woman’s painting of Emmett Till…” *The Root*, March 21, 2017.

<https://www.theroot.com/this-white-womans-painting-of-emmett-till-belongs-under-1793483717>

Lisa Larson Walker, “The Problem with the Whitney Biennial’s…” *Slate*, March 29, 2017.

<http://www.slate.com/arts/2018/01/did-oprah-just-announce-a-presidential-campaign.html>

Optional source analysis, **extra credit**: Open response to any of the sources.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 9:30 am

36th Annual Marion Thompson Wright Lecture Series.

This year's MTW will explore music and African American History.

I encourage you all to attend.

Extra credit: Attend and write a 1-2 page response to either Farah Jasmine Griffin or Daphne Brooks's remarks, drawing some connection between what either one says and any themes that have come up in class.

February 20

Paper one due.

More TBA.

February 27: March On Washington, I: Planning and Planners

Required Reading/Viewing:

- Bayard Rustin, "Organizing Manual #2, Final Plans for the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, August 28, 1963," <http://www.crmvet.org/docs/moworg2.pdf>

- Listen/read: <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/08/15/212338844/bayard-rustin-the-man-who-organized-the-march-on-washington>

- Read: "March on Washington, official flyer":

http://digitallibrary.hsp.org/admin/media/hsp_dams/images/5/6/2/95378_ca_object_representations_media_56214_full.jpeg.jpg

- Look and read (scroll to the bottom of this link and focus on the buttons and other posters):

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/changing-america-emancipation-proclamation-1863-and-march-washington-1963/1963/march-washington>

- Listen: speeches by Randolph and Rustin. **Links TBA.**

Source Analysis III (due date 1; choose 1):

1. What does organizing manual #2 suggest as the major concern of March organizers? Do a close reading of the manual to build **your argument**. Use 2-3 quotes as examples.
2. What stands out most in either Rustin or Randolph's remarks? Choose one passage from either speech to build **your argument**. Use 2-3 quotes as examples.
3. What do the flyers and buttons suggest about how march organizers represented the march to the world? Consider what is visible/present in these material objects and what is not visible/not present in these material objects to build **your argument**.

March 6: March on Washington, II: Speakers

Required Reading/Listening/Viewing:

- March on Washington, program and statement by organizers:

<http://www.crmvet.org/docs/mowprog.pdf>

- John Lewis, listen/watch and read:

Visual/audio of speech: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFs1eTsokJg>

Audio of speech: <https://www.wyzant.com/resources/lessons/history/hpol/march/lewis>

Text of speech: <http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/lewis-speech-at-the-march-on-washington-speech-text/>

- Martin Luther King, Jr., listen/watch and read:

Visual/audio of speech: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smEqnklfYs>

Audio and Text of speech: <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/i-have-dream-address-delivered-march-washington-jobs-and-freedom>

- Malcolm X, "Message to the Grassroots" (November 1963), excerpts:

Text of speech: <http://rcha.rutgers.edu/images/2016-2017/1960s/Documents/12.-RCHA-2016-The-Culture-of-the-Sixties-Malcolm-X-Message-to-the-Grass-Roots-condensed-1963.pdf>

Audio of speech: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a59Kwp35Z80>

Source Analysis III, (due date 2, choose 1)

1. Focus on one of the three speeches to explain 1-2 rhetorical strategies the speaker used to convey his main concerns. Do a close reading of one passage to build **your argument**. Use 2-3 quotes as examples.
2. What stands out most about the program for the March On Washington? Consider the sequence of events, the agenda, and who or what is present—and absent—in the program to build **your argument**. Use 2-3 quotes as examples.

March 13:

Spring break

March 20: March on Washington, III: Entertainment and Reception

Required Reading/Viewing/Listening:

- March On Washington entertainers: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10I6HtdJnWE>
- MORE TBA
- NBC coverage:

Source Analysis IV (**required for all**):

Please locate, print out and bring to class one article from either the *New York Times* or the *Chicago Defender* from 1963 (either in the time leading up to the March, coverage of the March, or its aftermath) that discusses these events. What stands out about how this publication wrote about the March?

March 27:

Paper 2 due

More TBA

April 3: Sports and Civil Rights, I: “The Fight of the Century”

Required Reading/Watching:

- Watch: *Unforgivable Blackness* (2005)
- More TBA, on Jack Johnson and Jim Jeffries

April 10: Sports and Civil Rights, II: Olympics

Required Reading/Watching:

Mal Whitfield, [“Let’s Boycott the Olympics,”](#) *Ebony*, March 1964
Dick Schaap, “The Revolt of the Black Athletes,” *Look*, 6 August 1968
Jack Scott, [“The White Olympics,”](#) *Ramparts*, May, 1968

Watch: *The 1968 Olympics: The Black Power Salute*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jnvCiKUILAw>

April 17: Sports and Civil Rights, III: Policing Black Bodies in the 21st Century

- Claudia Rankine, “Why We Need Serena Williams,” *New York Times*, August 20, 2015, and more TBA.

- “Colin Kaepernick’s Protest is working,” *Slate*, Sep 12, 2016 (and more TBA)
http://www.slate.com/articles/sports/sports_nut/2016/09/colin_kaepernick_s_protest_is_working.html;

April 24: Revising Workshop and Conclusions
TBA